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ABSTRACT

Activity and involvement are the keys to effective learning in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom. The fragile self-concepts of many adults, however, make them hesitate to plunge into the practice of their newly developed language skills. The answer may lie in simple games and role-playing activities that are useful in establishing an environment in which practice can be fun and mistakes can be made to seem less important. The five learning activities described here are intended to assist ESL teachers in injecting variety into their classrooms while helping their adult students practice their language skills. The first activity entails having students spot errors in sentences written on slips of paper. The second activity is a game intended to help students practice expressions of agreement and disagreement. In the third activity, students practice familiar vocabulary and indefinite articles by completing the sentence "I'm going to New York and I'm taking a(n)...." The fourth activity entails having students run through a mock meal and thereby practice vocabulary associated with dining. Students are given the opportunity to use number names and discriminate between them in the fifth activity, which is a number-guessing game. (MN)

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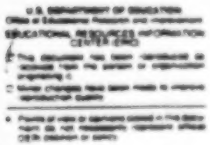
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

PUTTING VARIETY INTO THE ESL CLASSROOM



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Introduction

Activity and involvement are keys to effective learning in the ESL classroom. The development of language skills demands practice, but the fragile self-concepts of many adults make them hesitate to plunge into the practice of newly developed language skills. Simple games and role playing activities are useful in setting an environment in which practice can be fun and the making of mistakes seems less important. Moreover, such activities can put variety into your classroom.

The following suggestions and exercises have been taken from the module Teaching English as a Second Language: Conversational, a part of the series *Learning Modules for Adult Educators* developed at Texas A&M University. The coordinator of this module was Linda Dupree (Gibbs) with Waynne James, Module Editor, and Bob Fellenz, Project Director.

Guidelines to Consider When Using Variety Activities

The following are five activities that will allow you to put variety into your ESL classroom while students are working on applying language skills. Each activity has an overall purpose statement, a list of materials needed for completion, and procedures for implementing the activity. The keys to successfully using these are a realization by the students and teacher that learning can be fun, that mistakes occur during the normal learning process, and that students can be actively involved in their learning. Helpful guidelines for using such activities are to:

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ERROR SENTENCES

Purpose: To practice listening skills.
Materials: Slips of paper with sentences as described below.
Procedure: Distribute slips of paper on which are written sentences containing one work errors, such as:

There are eleven months in the year.
Cars are made of paper.
Leaves are blue.
Men wear skirts.

IN MY OPINION . . .

Purpose: To teach and practice expressions of agreement and disagreement.
Materials: Slips of paper with sentences as described below.
Procedures: Discuss and practice with the class the phrases to be used. The following are examples:

I agree.	I disagree.
You're right.	You're wrong about that.
That is true.	That's not always true.
That's correct.	Are you sure?

In the discussion, be sure to indicate which responses are more polite. Have the items written out so the students can refer to them during the activity.

Distribute slips of paper with statements written on them such as: (a) Young people today are lazy; (b) A girl should be twenty before she gets married.

Have one student read a sentence out loud. Have other students express an opinion using the phrases that have been practiced. Encourage students to give reasons for their opinions.

I'M GOING TO NEW YORK . . .

Purpose: To practice familiar vocabulary, to practice the use of indefinite articles "a" and "an," and to cultivate listening skills.
Materials: None!
Procedures: Practice the structure "I'm going to New York, and I'm taking a suitcase." Explain the rules for "a" and "an," giving several examples.

To play the game, the first student says, "I'm going to New York, and I'm taking a suitcase." The next student says, "I'm going to New York, and I'm taking a suitcase and a (any other item he wishes to name.)" Each student repeats all that has been said and adds an item. Be sure that all students understand each addition.

MOCK MEAL

Purpose: To practice vocabulary associate with dining.
Materials: Pictures of foods cut from magazines and mounted on paper or cardboard; also, paper and plastic utensils.
Procedures: Review the vocabulary associated with the visual aids. Write several model sentences on the board and practice saying them with the class. For example:

Please pass the _____.
Would you like some _____?
No, thank you.
Yes, please.
May I have some _____?
The _____ is very good.
I don't care for _____.

For practice purposes always insert a word into the blanks. Do not practice just part of a sentence.

- † *Adapt* activities to the interest and abilities of your group.
- † *Adjust* procedures to fit your class size. For example, do not have 2 people interact while 30 watch.
- † *Explain* procedures carefully and check for comprehension.
- † *Demonstrate* each activity with students who are fairly competent before involving the whole class.
- † *Avoid* material that may embarrass the students; many cultures are more reticent about personal matters than ours.
- † *Avoid* putting students on the spot by forcing them to participate. Let them learn by listening until they feel confident enough to speak.
- † *Give Control* to the students. Let them call on each other and suggest changes in the activity but watch for students that are left out.
- † *Correct Sparingly* in this sort of activity. Communication is the important thing.
- † *Change* activities before you hear the sound of your students' snores.

I HAVE A NUMBER . . .

Purpose: To practice using number names and to practice discriminating between them.
Materials: Cards 2 by 2 inches of poster board on which a number between 1 and 100 has been printed large.
Procedures: Teach the sentence, "I have a number between _____ and _____." Leave it on the board for reference during the game.

Give each student a card and do not let others see the cards when you distribute them.

For example, if the first student gets 37, he will say, "I have a number between 30 and 40." Other students call out their guesses freely--this way the game moves quickly, and students are forced to listen carefully to each other.

The first student who hears the correct number indicates who guessed it.